DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 707 UD 030 391

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TITLE Historical and Social Science Research on Mexican Americans.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 20p.; Chapter 12 in the "Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education," p203-22. See UD 030 379.
AVAILABLE FROM Individual chapters not available separately.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Cultural Differences; Educational History; *Educational Research; *Ethnic Groups; Historiography; *Immigrants; Literature Reviews; *Mexican Americans; Minority Groups; *Multicultural Education; Sex Differences; *Social Science Research; Stereotypes; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Chicanos

ABSTRACT

This historiographical survey divides the literature on Mexican Americans thematically into five sections: (1) Mexicans as a regionally conquered people (1821-1880); (2) the Mexican as immigrant (1880-1993); (3) the Mexican American minority (1920-1965); (4) Chicanos as a nationality (1965-1993); and (5) recent research trends (1985-1993). These dates are rough approximations for the primacy of these themes in the literature, but the divisions are not so chronologically clear in fact as the diffusion of information, population movements, and paradigm shifts do not always conform to neat and thematic divides. A look at particular works makes it clear that in each of these periods the Mexican population of the United States was negatively stigmatized by its culture and its occupations and persistently viewed as a problem to be cured, if not eradicated. Scholarship written by Chicanos themselves, as is currently emerging, is doing much to change the tenor of research. Mexicans have never fit the usual patterns of assimilation and acculturation, and a new look at the Mexican experience in the United States may cause a rethinking of assimilation as an explanatory model for Americanization. Issues of social mobility and gender are other areas that require research attention. (Contains 222 references.) (SLD)

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